

BROTHERLY LOVE

CONSIDERED AS THE

SIGN AND PROOF

OF THE

Christian's Growth in Divine Grace,

IN THREE DISCOURSES,

PREACHED AT ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, MANCHESTER,

BY THE REV. J. CLOWES, M. A.

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I. JOHN III. 14.

We know that we have passed from Death unto Life, because we love the Brethren.

IT was the blessed Priveledge of the Beloved Apostle and his Fellow-Believers, to have this happy Testimony in their own Minds, that they were *passed from Death unto Life*. They *knew* this to be the Case by a Conviction wrought within themselves; they had an indisputable *Sign* and *Proof* of it which they could not question; they were perswaded hereby that their Lot would be eternally happy; that they were restored to the Favour of God; that they were *one with God and God with them*; of Consequence, that Death, Misery, and Condemnation were no

longer to be dreaded by them, because they were *passed* far away from such Things, and born into another Kingdom. Thus their Souls were kept in Peace through all the Troubles and Disquietudes of this lower World, and having Hope in God, and being at Rest in Him, they *rejoiced with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.*

Let it not however be supposed, that these blessed Priviledges were intended to be confined to St. John and the first Disciples of Christianity. They belong alike to all those who profess the same holy Religion and obey it's heavenly Doctrines. They belong therefore to us, to You and to Me, and to every true Believer in JESUS CHRIST; and it is a Grace granted to every one of us, if we are wise enough to discover it, to be enabled to say, "*We know that we have passed from Death unto Life.*"

That this is the Case, will appear plain from the Consideration of these two Particulars, to which I could earnestly wish to engage your present most serious Attention,

1st. The Nature of the *Passage* here spoken of by the Apostle *from Death unto Life;*

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2dly. The Sign or Proof of our having made this Passage, viz. *because we love the Brethren.*

1st. then let us consider the Nature of the Passage spoken of by the Apostle *from Death unto Life.*

It is a Matter little thought of by the Generality of Christians, that there is such a *Passage from Death unto Life*; and still less is it considered that this *Passage* is to be made by us in this World, otherwise it never can be made; and least of all is it in general apprehended, how the thoughtless and impenitent never discover this *Passage*, but abide in the Regions of *Death*, whilst the penitent and sincere Believer, he both discovers the *Passage*, and walks therein, until he arrives at the Regions of *eternal Life* and Peace.

The Generality of Christians therefore think of no other Death but the Death of the Body, and of no other Passage to Life but the Passage through the Grave of the Body; and thus alas! too many, it is to be feared, neglect to look for that Passage till it is too late to find it, and never *pass from Death unto Life*, because being blinded by the Delusions of

of Sin, they did not believe such a Thing possible or attainable here below.

But, Beloved, that there is a Passage *from Death unto Life*, is plain from the concurrent Testimony of the Word of God throughout; and that this Passage is such, as that we may both discover it, and may make it, during our Abode in this World, is equally plain from the Declaration of the Apostle in my Text, speaking of himself and of other Believers, "*We know that we have passed from Death unto Life.*"

From this Declaration it is manifest, not only that there is a Passage from *Death unto Life*, but that Men like ourselves also had made the Passage, and *knew* that they had made it, even during their Abode in this World.

To the same Purpose, but in different Words, the Apostle Paul bears this Testimony, "*Giving Thanks to the Father, which hath made us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; who hath delivered us from the Power of Darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son.*"*

Here

* COLLOSS. 1. 12. 13.

Here St. Paul speaks, both in his own Name, and in that of his Fellow-Christians, of a *Deliverance from the Power of Dark-ness, and a Translation into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ*, which they had experienced, even whilst they were living in the Body here below; which is the same Thing as what St. John calls the *passing from Death unto Life*.

The first Christians therefore, it is most manifest, not only *knew* and were assured that there was a Passage *from Death unto Life*, even to be found in this World, but they also discovered this passage, and made it, during their Abode here below, and were moreover assured, to their unspeakable Comfort, and by the most incontrovertible Signs and Proofs, that they had made this Passage.

And yet these were men like unto ourselves; they were subject to the same infirmities, they had the same Corruptions to struggle with, were exposed to like Temptations with ourselves; neither had they any other or higher Helps than we Christians have at this Day: The Almighty did not favour them more than he doth us; his Grace was not stronger or more powerful in their Bosoms than we might

might find it to be in ours; Heaven was not nearer or more open to them than it is to us; and yet, we find they were enabled to attain unto this most happy of all human Conditions, to *know* that they were *passed from Death unto Life*.

What I would therefore here contend for, and wish to press upon your present most earnest Consideration, is this, that what those first Christians once attained to, is still attainable by us, if we will but be as faithful to our God and his Word, and as true to our own best Interests, as they were. We may therefore *pass from Death unto Life*, even during our Abode in this World, as certainly and fully, as ever St. John, St. Paul, or any other of our Lord's first Disciples did. We may have the same Signs and infallible Proofs, which they had, that we are so *passed*. We may thus attain, if we be so disposed, unto the same Grounds of heavenly Hope, Assurance, and Comfort in our Acceptance with God.

For the Religion of the Blessed Jesus, let it be well noted, is the same Religion at this Day, that it was seventeen or eighteen hundred

dred Years ago. The Minds of Men, as to their Belief in it and their Reception of it, may indeed be changed, but itself cannot change. It's Doctrines are still the same, and will remain so to Eternity. It's Power upon the human Soul, if it be rightly received, is also still the same. It is capable therefore of effecting *now* what it effected in *old Time*. It can still open Heaven to the true Believer; it can still transform Man from earthly to heavenly; it can still *deliver from the Power of Darkness, and translate us into the Kingdom* of it's Divine Author; it can, in short, still enable us to say, if we are not wanting to ourselves, what was said to their unspeakable Bliss by them of old Time, *We know that we have passed from Death unto Life.*

I am well aware however, that this will hardly be believed by the carnal and the careless. All such are unwilling to allow that the Powers of Heaven are so near them, or that as much Fruit of those Powers will be expected from them, as from the Saints of old. Thus they set Limits to the Operations of God, which God himself hath not set, and which he hath declared he never will set. They say, for Instance, " Apostles might look

" for extraordinary Advancements in Divine
 " Grace; they might overcome the World
 " and the Flesh; they might become the
 " Sons of God; they might, by the purity
 " of their Lives, and the Power of their Faith,
 " *pass from Death unto Life*; but this is not to
 " be expected in *our Days*; it was never in-
 " tended *we* should experience such Influ-
 " ences of Divine Grace, or bring forth
 " such Fruits thereof in our Hearts and
 " Lives."

Thus do the carnal and the careless labour
 to reason themselves out of the real Excellency
 of their Religion and all its Benefits, by sup-
 posing those Benefits to be confined to those
 few who first received the Gospel of *Christ*.
 But, Beloved, permit me, by Way of Conclu-
 sion to this Part of my present Subject, to
 caution you most earnestly against suffering
 your Minds to be betrayed into such unwor-
 thy, false and dangerous Sentiments of your
 Religion and it's Divine Author. For this
 Purpose ponder well with Yourselves the ge-
 nuine Design of the Gospel of Christ, and
 the *Unchangeableness* thereof. It's Intention
 is, and needs must be the same *now*, that it

was

was at it's *first* Preaching and Establishment. The Powers and Priviledges which it presents to the true Believer are also the same. As therefore it formerly operated on the Minds of Apostles, Confessors, Martyrs, and Thousands of other holy Disciples, to convert them to JESUS CHRIST, to turn them from Sin and Vanity, to transform them from earthly to heavenly, to purify, change, redeem, and renew their sinful Natures, and thus to make them *pass from Death unto Life*, even so also it would operate at this Day, if Men's Minds were but in a like state to admit and comply with it's Operation.

Believe then this to be the real Truth, and that of Consequence you are now called, and every Believer in the Gospel is called, to experience the same blessed Effects from it that the Apostles themselves experienced. I do not say that you are to look for the Gift of working Miracles as they did, nor to go about the World to convert it by your Preaching like a St. Peter or St. Paul, but this you are certainly to look for, viz. to believe in and to love JESUS CHRIST, the incarnate GOD and SAVIOUR, as they believed in and loved Him; and in this Belief and Love to love your

Brethren as St. Peter and St. Paul loved their Brethren; and thus to be meek, humble, patient, contented, and charitable, as you read the Lord's first Disciples were; and to overcome the Devil the World and the Flesh, as they did; and hereby to *pass from Death unto Life*. For search and consult your own Minds, and see whether you can discover there any Reason, why you should be less holy than St. John, or any other of the Lord's first Disciples were. Is it not in your Power to love God and your Neighbour as they did? Cannot you repent and believe in JESUS CHRIST as well as them? Cannot you therefore grow alike in the Divine Grace, and attain unto a like Measure of true Christian Virtues? Make but the Experiment, and make it with Sincerity, and believe me, or rather believe God, you will soon be fully convinced, that the Measure of Holiness to which the Saints of old were called and attained, is the very same to which you also are called and *may* attain.

Away then with all vain Reasonings: Repent and believe the Gospel: Turn unto JESUS CHRIST the manifested Jehovah, and keep his Commandments; and you will then
soon

soon experience that Heaven is still open, God is still near and powerful, and his Grace still operative as in old Time; whereby you will sooner or later be enabled to your unspeakable Bliss to say with the Apostle, *We know that we have passed from Death unto Life.*

JOHN III. 14.

We know that we have passed from Death unto Life, because we love the Brethren.

SERMON

IN the foregoing Discourse we endeavoured to point out the Nature of the Passage from Death unto Life here spoken of, as being a Passage to be performed during our Abode in this World, and to which all Christians are alike called universally. We shall now proceed further to shew the Nature of this Passage, and then consider

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the *Sign* or *Proof* here mentioned by the Apostle of our having made this Passage, viz. *because we love the Brethren.*

It must be very plain to every considerate Person, that by *passing from Death unto Life* is not meant any *bodily* Passage, or any Change of Place or Situation with Respect to the *Body*.

For if the *Body* was to move ever so far in any Direction, upwards or downwards, it would not be possible for us to depart further from *Death*, or to approach nearer unto *Life*, than we were before.

The Case is, the Terms *Life* and *Death*, as used in holy Scripture, are applied to denote, not any particular State of the *Body*, but particular States of the *Soul*, or *Spirit*, with Respect to God and the Things of his eternal Kingdom.

According to this Application of the Terms *Life* and *Death*, to *pass from Death unto Life*, denotes a Change wrought in the internal State of the *Soul* or *Spirit*, so that whereas it before lived in a State of spiritual *Death*, it now begins to live in a State of spiritual *Life*.

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As for Example: It is written in holy Scripture, "Man doth not *live* by Bread only, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of the Lord doth Man live:"* And in another Place, "If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments:"† By which Words we are plainly taught this Truth, that *not* to partake of the *Word of the Lord*, or *not* to keep his *Commandments*, is a State of spiritual *Death*; but on the contrary, that to partake of the *Word of the Lord*, or to keep his *Commandments*, is a State of spiritual *Life*: Whensoever then the Soul or Spirit of Man, which heretofore had no Knowledge and Love of the Lord and of his *Word*, begins now to perceive an inward Sense of Love and Regard thereto, and takes Delight in the Ways of God, and the *keeping of his Commandments*, such a Soul or Spirit is said to *pass from Death unto Life*.

So again: The Apostle speaks of being *dead in Trespasses and Sins*.‡ To live therefore in *Trespasses and Sins* against God is a State of spiritual *Death*; of Consequence to cease

* Deut. viii. 3. Matt. iv. 4. Luke iv. 4.

† Matt. xix. 17. ‡ Ephes. ii. 1.

cease from *Trespases and Sins*, and to begin to lead a *new Life*, is a State of spiritual *Life*; and this Change wrought in the Soul from a State of *Trespases and Sins* to a contrary State of Purity and Holiness is therefore a *Passing from Death unto Life*.

So again: *She that liveth in Pleasure*, saith the Apostle, *is dead whilst she liveth*;* that is, the Soul or Spirit, which indulgeth in the mere Pleasures of the carnal, worldly, and sensual Life, and knoweth no better and higher Enjoyments than these, is in a State of *Death*; to come out of this State then, so as to begin to be made sensible of other and superior Pleasures to those of Flesh and Blood, viz. the eternal Pleasures of Righteousness, which flow from the Knowledge and Love of God, this is to begin truly *to live*; and the Change wrought hereby in the State of the Soul or Spirit, is a real *Passage from Death unto Life*.

To mention one other Instance, which may serve to set this Matter in a still clearer Light. When the repenting Prodigal returns unto his Father, we are informed of the glad and welcome Reception which his Father

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gives

gives him, how he ordered the *fatted Calf* to be killed, saying, *let us eat and be merry*; for which he gives this very extraordinary Reason, "*This my Son was dead and is alive again.*"* Here every enlightened Person may see plainly what is meant in holy Scripture by being *dead* and being *alive*, or by *Death* and *Life*. When the Prodigal had no Regard to his Father, or his Father's House, and felt no Desire of returning thereto, *but was wasting his Substance in riotous Living*, he is then said to be *dead*, tho' he was living at the same Time in all the Gratifications and Enjoyments of Riot and Luxury of this World and the Flesh: But as soon as ever he is weary of these wretched Satisfactions, and begins to feel a Warmth of penitent Affection kindled towards his Father, with Desire to return to him and to his House, he is then said to be *alive*, tho' at the same Time he ceased to live to his former bodily and carnal Enjoyments.

Here then, if we be so disposed, we may all see clearly what is meant in holy Scripture by *Death* and *Life*, and by *passing* from the one to the other. *Death* is to live without

* Luke xv. 24. 32.

out God and his Word, or, what is the same Thing, to have no Love towards God, and no Delight in Him and in his Commandments. *Life* on the contrary is to live with God, and to partake of his Word, that is, to have Love towards God, and to find Delight to our Souls in the Way of his Commandments. To *pass from Death unto Life* then, in this particular Instance, is to come out of a State of *no* Love towards God, and *no* Delight in his Word, into a State wherein we both love and delight in God, and in the Purities of his Word and Commandment.

Again—*Death* is a State of wilful Sin and Impenitence; *Life* therefore is a State of Repentance or ceasing from Sin: *Death* again is a State of false Pleasures and Satisfactions, such as are those of this World and the Flesh, when separated from the Pleasures of Righteousness: *Life* therefore on the other Hand is a State of *real* Pleasures and Satisfactions, such as are those arising from the Love of God: In these Instances therefore, to *pass from Death unto Life* is to pass through Repentance from the vain and false Gratifications of the corrupt Part of our Natures, which is carnal and worldly-minded, to be

made sensible within ourselves of the pure and eternal Delights flowing from the Love of God, and the Communications of his Peace to our Minds and Consciences.

And would we know, Beloved, the real, deep, and scriptural Ground of all this, it is as follows. There is but one true and real *Life*, and one true and real Fountain of *Life*, and that is God, and his Word and Kingdom. Whatever then is not connected with God, his Word, and Kingdom, this, in the Language of holy Scripture, is said to be *dead*, or in a State of *Death*. Devils therefore, or infernal Spirits, tho' living in a State of most exquisite Feeling and Sensibility, are still said to be *dead*, and to dwell in the Regions of *Death*; the Reason is, because by Love they have no Conjunction with God, his Word, and Kingdom from whence alone Life cometh. In like Manner impenitent and ungodly Men are said to be *dead*, and to dwell in the Regions of *the Shadow of Death*, tho' possibly they may be living at the same Time in the highest State of worldly Gratification and fleshly Sensibilities, and the Reason is the same, viz. because by the Impenitence and Impurity of their Lives, they
separate

separate themselves from Conjunction with God and his Life. We talk indeed of other *Life* besides the Life which is of God, and of other *Death* besides that which consists in Separation of the Love from God. Thus we talk of the *Life* of Vegetables, and of the *Life* of Animals, which are incapable of loving God, and being thus conjoined with him: We say also of Men that they are *living*, or *alive*, when we see them alive and active in the Love and Pursuit of the Things of this World, animated with the Prospects of Ambition, Gain, Glory, or Sensuality: We say also of the same Men that they are *dead*, when we see them cease to live in the Body, notwithstanding their beginning to live instantly in another World, in a State of Feeling and Perception far superior to what they experienced here below. It is however well to be attended to, that tho' in common Language we apply the Terms

Life and *Death* in these subordinate and lower Senses, yet, as used in holy Scripture, they have a higher and infinitely more important Signification: What Man therefore frequently calls *Life*, God calls *Death*, and what Man calls *Death*, God on the contrary calls

calls *Life*: The Reason is, God calls Nothing *Life*, and allows Nothing to be *alive*, but what is connected with Himself, the only *Life*, by a living Principle of Love and Understanding; and therefore in his Sight, and according to his Language, the mere natural, animal, or unregenerate *Life* of Man, let it's Feelings, Perceptions, and Delights seem ever so exquisite, is but *Death*, or the Shadow and Image of true *Life*, as having no Conjunction by Love and Wisdom with the eternal and only Source of the true *Life*, according as it is written, "*To be carnally-minded is Death, but to be spiritually-minded is Life.*"*

The continual Call of God therefore unto Man, in his Word, is to come and enter by Repentance, by Faith and Obedience, or, in other Words, with his *Life's* Love, and Understanding, and Operation, into Conjunction with Himself the *Fountain of Life*, that so he may live for ever; this Conjunction alone being true *Life*, and worthy of the Name. In his natural State, we know, Man has no such

* Rom. viii. 6.

such Conjunction, for in his natural State, by Reason of hereditary and actual Evil, he has no true Love towards God, but loves himself and the World better than God and his Neighbour. In his natural State therefore he is *dead*, or in a State of *Death*, from which State he cannot possibly be delivered but by returning to God, and entering into Conjunction with him, through his Word or Commandment.

Nevertheless, tho' Man be by Nature in a State of *Death*, yet it is his own Fault if he continues therein, and absolutely *dies* for ever. For God giveth every one of us Power to come out of this *Death* and enter into the Regions of *Life*, inasmuch as he giveth every one of us Power to know and to love Him, and to know, and love and practise his Word, and thus to re-enter into Conjunction with him, which is *eternal Life*.

For let us search now, and examine ourselves whether we have not all of us this Power from God in our inner Man, and we shall assuredly find that we have it. For cannot we think of God, if we be so disposed, as often as we please? Cannot we think of Sin that it is opposite to God, and therefore separates

rates us from God? Cannot we think of Holiness that is from God and agreeable to God, and therefore unites us with God? Cannot we therefore say thus to ourselves, I will hate and renounce Sin, because it separates me from God, and I will love and practise Holiness, because it joins me with God? And cannot we thus assure ourselves, that as we depart from Sin and enter into Conjunction with God, we shall *pass from Death unto Life*? Only let us be at the Pains to examine ourselves, and make the Experiment, and we shall certainly find that we are in Possession of the blessed Power and Privilege here described.

I should now proceed to consider the Sign and Proof given in the Words of my Text, of our having *passed from Death unto Life*, viz. *because we love the Brethren*, but the present Time will only permit me to conclude what has been already said, with this brief but affectionate Expostulation.

Are we, Beloved, of the happy Number of those who have made the Passage *from Death unto Life*, or are we still walking in the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*? Let us examine ourselves well in this important Matter.

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Are we returned into God? Do we begin to find a Love towards God, and a real Delight of Heart in Him and his Ways? Are we for this Purpose turned, or in the Desire to turn, from all known Evils, because they are opposite to God? Do we cease to delight in Sin and Vanity of this World and the Flesh; and do we consider well, that they who live in the fond Indulgence of mere carnal and earthly Pleasures, are *dead whilst they live*? Is it thus become the chief Affection, Satisfaction and Endeavour of our Lives to enter into Conjunction with God, his Word, and Kingdom, by well-doing, that so we may *live* for ever? Some such few Questions as these, seriously proposed, and sincerely answered, will soon bring us acquainted with the State of our Souls, how far we are *passed from Death unto Life*.

And blessed shall he be who upon such an Examination shall find, that he is not still abiding in the Regions of Death and Misery. Blessed shall he be whose Conscience bears him Testimony that he hath begun to love his God and Redeemer, and to delight in the Paths of Life and Righteousness. He is on the Highway which leadeth to the New

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Jerusalem.

Jerusalem. He hath departed from the City of Destruction and is about to enter into the City of the Lord of Hosts. Mount Zion is directly before his Face, and tho' his Body be here upon Earth amongst Men, yet his Spirit is travelling in the Midst of Angels to take Possession of the promised Inheritance, the Land of everlasting Life, which is the blessed Portion of all those that fear God and keep his Commandments. AMEN.

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

I JOHN III. 14.

We know that we have passed from Death unto Life, because we love the Brethren.

HAVING already endeavoured to shew, in the two foregoing Discourses, what is here implied and to be understood by *passing from Death unto Life*, I shall now proceed, as was proposed, to consider lastly the *Sign* or *Proof* here mentioned, of our having made this Passage, viz. *because we love the Brethren.*

This *Sign* or *Proof* however cannot possibly be understood, untill it be first known who are here meant by those whom the Apostle calls *the Brethren*. May I therefore bespeak your serious Attention to this previous Consideration, from which it will plainly appear what is implied and understood by *loving the Brethren*.

Now the Apostles and first Christians, we know, called all those *the Brethren*, or *the Brotherhood*, who were united together in one common Faith and Love, that is, in Faith and Love towards their common God and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, operating in Newness of Life according to his Commandments.

Wherever they saw this operative Faith and Love, there they acknowledged a *Brother*, and they respected, revered, honoured, loved and cherished him, as one begotten again of the same heavenly Parent with themselves, and making one of that great and holy Family, Body, or Kingdom, whose Head is the great REDEEMER, the manifested GOD, the LORD JESUS CHRIST; herein following the Spirit and Example of their Divine Master, who had taught them, *My*
Mother

*Mother and my Brethren are they, who bear the Word of God and do it.**

It was not therefore any outward Condition or Circumstances, with Regard to this World, which determined this *Brotherhood*. Rank and Riches were no Qualifications to be admitted into the holy *Fraternity*; neither did Poverty and Meanness of Birth exclude any: The single Question respecting any one was this, Doth he believe in JESUS CHRIST the God who hath lately appeared amongst us to take away our Sins? and doth he manifest his Faith by Love, or by a Life according to the Commandments of this God? If so, he is a *Brother*, be he rich or poor, be his Birth honourable or dishonourable in the Eyes of Men.

And as the Conditions of Men, with Regard to their outward worldly Circumstances, was of no Account in forming this *Brotherhood* amongst the first Christians, so neither was the Love, which influenced the Members of this *Brotherhood*, grounded in, or determined by, any mere natural Affections, such as arise from natural Relationships, Friendships,

* Luke viii. 21. See also Matt. xiii. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. and Mark iii. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35.

Friendships, and partial worldly Attachments one towards another.

There is a Principle, we know, which often is called Love, and passes for Christian Love and Charity amongst Men, which has no higher Source, no deeper Ground, than that of mere animal Instinct, or natural Similitude, or worldly Associations for the Sake of worldly Interests, Comfort or Convenience.

This however was not the Principle which operated to produce *brotherly Love* amongst the Apostles and first Christians. These holy Persons were wrought upon by higher and more heavenly Motives herein, than any which arise from mere worldly Connections or Relationships of Flesh and Blood. In this Respect was verified what is written of them, that they were *born not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God.** Their Attachment therefore towards each other was a Divine and holy Attachment: It had it's Ground and Source in the great Father of all Spirits: It was an holy Principle of heaven-born Charity, which being eternal and stable as it's Origin, was not subject to those Variations, Changes, and Caprices,

* John 1. 13.

Caprices, which ever accompany mere human and natural Affections, let them be ever so near and tender.

We are not however to suppose, that this Love and Attachment of the first Christians towards each other was merely spiritual, unattended with Work and Operation, which is the Fruit of Charity; for it was a principal Lesson of their Love, *not to love in Word and in Tongue only, but in Deed and in Truth.**

They revered each other therefore as Children of Heaven and Immortality; but this was not all; from this Reverence they were led to exercise every outward Act of Benevolence one towards another; their Lives were continually employed in doing Good, and it was their supreme Joy and Delight to be serviceable in the smallest Respect to any, who bore the Stamp and Image of the God whom they worshipped.

From this short View then of what the Apostles and first Christians understood by the *Brethren*, or *Brotherhood*, and of the Nature and Operation of their Love towards the *Brethren*, it will now plainly appear to every considerate Person what is meant and implied

* 1 John 3. 18.

implied by this Sign or Proof of passing from Death unto Life, viz. *because we love the Brethren.*

To love the Brethren, is to love *that* in others which is of God, that is, the Divine Image and Likeness, or in other Words, all those living and heavenly Graces, Virtues, and Excellencies, which proceed from a sound and pure Faith and Love towards the Lord God and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. But this is not all — *To love the Brethren* further implies that our Love becomes operative in *good Works*; or in producing it's proper outward Fruits; it implies therefore an external Life of active Benevolence, corresponding with that internal and heavenly Principle from which it proceeds: He who *loves the Brethren*, therefore, not only reveres the Divine Image and Likeness in his Fellow-Creatures, but labours also continually to cherish, comfort, strengthen, and bring it forth in all, according to his utmost Ability and the best Talents which God has given him.

Let me bespeak, Beloved, your most particular and earnest Attention to this Mark and Character of a true Christian, or of one who
hath

hath *passed from Death unto Life*, that so you may examine by it the State of your Hearts and Lives.

There is nothing we are so apt to deceive ourselves in, if we are not well upon our Guard, and well enlightened with the genuine Light of Truth, as *Love towards the Brethren*, often calling that *brotherly Love*, which is no such Thing, but which is possibly the very Reverse, whereby we do essential Mischief to our eternal Interests.

Thus for Example; the mere natural Man sometimes fancies that he has *brotherly Love*, because he has much *natural Tenderness and Affection* towards some particular Persons, to whom he is united by particular natural Ties either of Blood, of Friendship, or of worldly Interest.

But such *natural Affection*, it is well to be observed, is a Thing totally distinct from what is called in the Scriptures *brotherly Love* or Charity; and therefore we frequently find that very wicked Persons have as much, or possibly more, of such *natural Affection*, than real regenerate Christians, according to those Words of our Lord, *Sinners also love those that love*
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them,

them, and Sinners also do Good to those that do Good to them.

Natural Affection therefore is a Principle totally distinct from the Affection of Gospel Charity or brotherly Love. For *natural Affection* is a mere animal Instinct, common alike to the just and to the unjust, to them that are passed from Death unto Life, and to them who know Nothing of such a Passage; yea, *natural Affection* is even common to Man with the Beasts that perish, for we find that the Beasts, even those which are most fierce and savage, are attached by strong *natural Sympathies* towards their young and towards one another. Do not however misunderstand me, as if I here meant to censure or debase the Principle of *natural Affection, Sympathy, and Tendernefs*, whether amongst Men or amongst Beasts. This is far from my Design and Meaning: Such Principles and Affections have their Uses in their proper Times and Places, and when kept in due Order of Subordination to higher Affections and Principles: All I wish here to observe, and to lead you to observe, is this, that *natural Affection* is not Gospel Charity; *natural Tendernefs* is not brotherly Love; *natural Feeling and Sympathy* is not spiritual
Grace

Grace and evangelical Virtue; and that of consequence, before we can attain to that Measure of Christian Purity and Perfection implied by *loving the Brethren*, we must attain to some higher and more heavenly Principle than that of mere *natural Affection, Tendernefs, Feeling, and Sympathy*.

But methinks I hear you ask, What then is this higher and more heavenly Principle, which is distinct from mere *natural Affection*? It has been already shown, in what was observed concerning the first Christians. It is to regard *that* in others which is *born of God*, and to call *that* a *Brother*. It is to regard therefore in one another *the Divine Image and Likeness*, and to love and cherish it accordingly. It is to be determined in our Likings and Dislikings, our Affections and Disaffections, no longer by mere natural or temporal Principles, such as are those of the *Flesh* and of this *World*, but by spiritual and eternal Principles, such as regard the *Family, Body, and Kingdom of Jesus Christ*.

Behold here the great Mark of Distinction between the Love which influences the mere *natural Man*, and that which influences the real and *heaven-born Christian*! The mere *natural Man* loves according to blind and partial

tial Instinct: The *Christian* loves according to an enlightened and universal Principle of charity: The mere *natural Man* calls him *Brother*, to whom he is attached by Blood, by natural Friendship, or by Interest. The *Christian* calls him *Brother*, to whom he is attached by spiritual Bonds of Faith and Love in the same God and Redeemer: What the *natural Man* therefore loves in another is somewhat merely of the *Flesh*, or of this *World*: What the *Christian* loves in another, is somewhat of the *Spirit*, and of another *World*: The *natural Man* loves the outward Person or personal Qualities of another: The *Christian* loves the inward Spirit, or spiritual Qualities, that is the *Divine Image and Likeness*. Thus the Love of the *natural Man* is grounded in mere *Nature*, and has no higher Origin and End: But the Love of the true *Christian* ascends high above *Nature*; it's Source is from Heaven and the God of Heaven; and it's End, like it's Origin, is eternal, being rooted in the eternal Principles of Justice and Judgment, of Order and Uprightness, of Sincerity and Truth, which constitute the eternal Kingdom of JESUS CHRIST, and being active, operative and fruitful in good Works according to such Principles,

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To conclude—Let me earnestly recommend to you, Beloved, to try and prove your Christian Faith, and the Ground of your Christian Hopes, and whether you are *passed from Death unto Life*, by the Marks and Characters of *brotherly Love* as above described.

This is a sure Test which will not deceive you, and without this there is no other Test on which you may safely depend. It is not, you may be well aware, a mere *nominal Faith* or Profession; it is not because you belong to this or that Body of Christians, as distinguished from others by a Name or a Form; it is not because you have much Warmth of natural Affection, Tenderneſs, and Attachment towards particular Persons; ſtill leſs is it, because you have a natural Zeal for *holy Things*, and can put up holy Prayers to God *with your Lips*, and can *talk learnedly* about God and the Things of his Kingdom; it is not, I ſay, for any, or for all of theſe Things, that you can hope for Acceptance in God's Sight; for all theſe Qualifications may be the Qualifications of very wicked Persons, who have no Part in the holy Family, Brotherhood and Kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt, and therefore are not *passed from Death unto Life*.

There is then but this one ſingle Qualification,

tion, which can be a safe and solid Ground of your Hope and Trust, viz. *brotherly Love*, But be sure examine yourselves well concerning this Qualification, and take Heed that you be not deceived respecting it. Mark especially the Distinction above pointed out between mere *natural Affection* and *Gospel Charity*. *Natural Affection* is of itself a mere *dead Thing*, before God, and receives all it's *true Life* from *Charity*. Howbeit, *Charity*, or *brotherly Love*, does not destroy *natural Affection*; it only quickens, sanctifies it, and makes it eternal; it also renders it's Operations more regular, constant, and orderly. Ask yourselves therefore over and over some such Questions as these, What is it that I love in another? Is it the *Divine Image and Likeness*, or is it only Something of Nature? Do I love my Neighbour, not because he is rich, not because he is learned, not because he is esteemed and honourable in the Eyes of Men, not because he is agreeable to my own natural Temper and Complexion, and still less because he is united to me by the Bonds of Blood and Relationship? but do I love him because he loves God; because I see in him a Godlike Spirit and Temper; because he is humble, just, sincere, upright, faithful, fearful of offending
 God

God, and seeking to attain unto a godlike Nature? Do I therefore regard chiefly and principally in my Fellow-Creatures the *Divine Image and Likeness*; and is it become the continual Labour and Delight of my Life, and of all my Actions, to administer in some Way or other, according to my Talents, to the bringing forth, perfecting, comforting, and cherishing such *Divine Image and Likeness*?

And inasmuch as I cannot love what is of God, unless I be of God myself; inasmuch as I cannot have any Respect for *God's Image and Likeness* in another, until I myself am formed into his *Image and Likeness*, is it lastly become my daily Labour and Endeavour to be made a Child of God myself, that so I may the better love his Children as my Brethren?

Some such few Questions as these, seriously proposed and answered, would soon enable us to determine our State of Advancement in the Divine Favour, and how far we were *passed from Death unto Life*. May we all then, through the Divine Grace and Mercy, be led to this serious Examination of our Hearts and Lives, that so we may all attain unto the unspeakable Comfort of *knowing* that we are indeed *passed from Death unto Life*!

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